

## **CHAPTER ONE: THE ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES OF CHARLES PINCKNEY NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE, 1754-1816**

As the low country plantation home of Charles Pinckney, a drafter of the Constitution, the Charles Pinckney National Historic Site derives its national significance from its association with the life of Charles Pinckney and the broad patterns in early American history that shaped Charles Pinckney's world. Snee Farm and its inhabitants illustrate the complex web of economic, social, and political realities that influenced Charles Pinckney and created early American culture. The Snee Farm plantation was the country seat of one branch of the wealthy and prominent Pinckney family. As was typical with the low country elite, the family did not reside on the farm, but principally in Charleston, visiting the plantation several times a year. Despite the fact that the farm was not the Pinckneys' primary residence, there can be little doubt as to its economic and social importance to the family.

Through the historic resources at Snee Farm, we gain a more complete appreciation of the cultural and economic environment that influenced the life of Charles Pinckney and in turn derive a greater understanding of his contributions to our history. Subsequent owners constructed all of the current plantation structures; thus we rely on archeology to unravel the story of Snee Farm during Pinckney's era. Archeological investigations to date provide a demonstrable connection between the farm and Charles Pinckney. More broadly, investigations also reveal important information about Colonial America and the young American Republic, particularly relating to slave life and the emergence of Gullah culture on low country plantations. As the primary residents on Snee Farm and the majority of the population of the low country, African Americans played a key role in establishing the unique world of coastal South Carolina. This context establishes a framework for interpreting the archeological resources relating to the comprehensive uses of Snee Farm during the Pinckney era by all its inhabitants.

The purchase of Snee Farm in 1754 by Charles Pinckney's father, Colonel Charles Pinckney, reflects the customs of the eighteenth-century South Carolina elite. Colonel Pinckney was a prominent and wealthy lawyer. The low country landed gentry, however, stood at the apogee of colonial society because of the immense wealth created by rice plantations. The possession of plantations and slaves validated social status. Charleston merchants and lawyers, eager to join the ranks of the planter class, bought plantations, thus consolidating their wealth and social standing. In keeping with the eighteenth-century ideal, Colonel Charles Pinckney purchased Snee Farm along with Drainfields and Fee Farm on the Ashepoo River. Whether their income came principally from the land or a profession, South Carolina planters followed similar residential patterns, alternating town and country living. Elite families usually spent only limited time in the early spring and late fall at their country residences. The winter social season (from January through March) was spent in Charleston, and the malarial fever season (from May to the first frost) was spent in Charleston, or the upcountry.

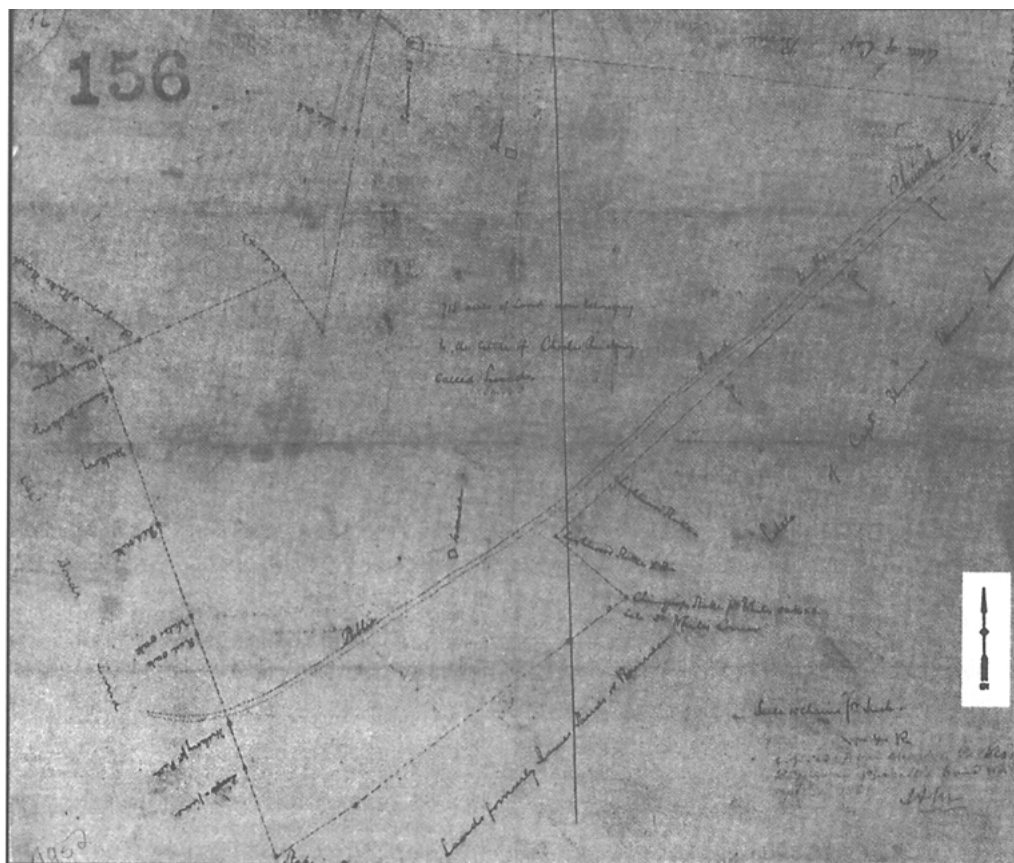


Figure 8, 1783 Plat of Snee Farm Property

Primary document research has revealed little about how frequently the Pinckney family visited Snee Farm while Charles was growing up.<sup>1</sup> Some information can be gleaned from the close inspection of scattered primary and numerous secondary sources. Letters demonstrate that during the 1775 Christmas season, when Charles was eighteen, the family was at Snee Farm. It is possible that they spent many Christmas holidays there.<sup>2</sup> Charles Pinckney's 1778 election to the South Carolina House of Representatives from Christ

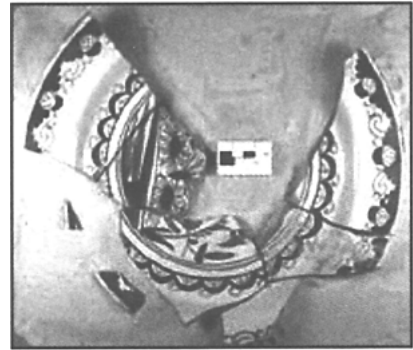


Figure 9, Fragments of fine china

Church Parish indicates that Snee Farm may have also been a vehicle for Pinckney's political ambitions.<sup>3</sup> Snee Farm was closer to Charleston than any other Pinckney property, so the family probably made more frequent excursions to the site. A nineteenth-century property dispute involving Snee Farm also hints at the family's strong connection to site. The court records describe the "handsome garden and adjoining pleasure grounds" that were "carefully tended and embellished by (Col.) Charles Pinckney, Governor (Charles) Pinckney and the plaintiff."<sup>4</sup> Colonel Pinckney's 1787 estate inventory also listed a gardener among the forty slaves living at Snee Farm.<sup>5</sup> The presence of a gardener and the description of the gardens may indicate considerable attention was paid to the grounds, an expense likely to be incurred only if the family visited the property often. Archeological investigations further support this theory and have exposed a number of trenches believed to be associated with the gardens surrounding the plantation house.

Subsurface remains at the site include numerous objects confirming the family's use of the property in the eighteenth century. These objects include silver spoons with the Pinckney monogram, wine bottle seals with the Pinckney name, crystal goblets, and fragments of fine china. This evidence, along with the foundations of the site's structures, does not yield direct information about Pinckney's political contributions, but does represent a unique and irreplaceable archive about Charles Pinckney and the Pinckney family.

Archeological evidence indicates that the Pinckney family's Snee Farm residence was not a grand structure, but a small, comfortable house more typical of Charleston area plantations than the lavish Middleton Place or Drayton Hall. The original house was located directly beneath the standing plantation main house and had a similar footprint. The architectural materials found at the site confirm that the house belonged to someone of Pinckney's high social status. Among the rubble of bricks and windowpane glass were pieces of plaster in light blue-

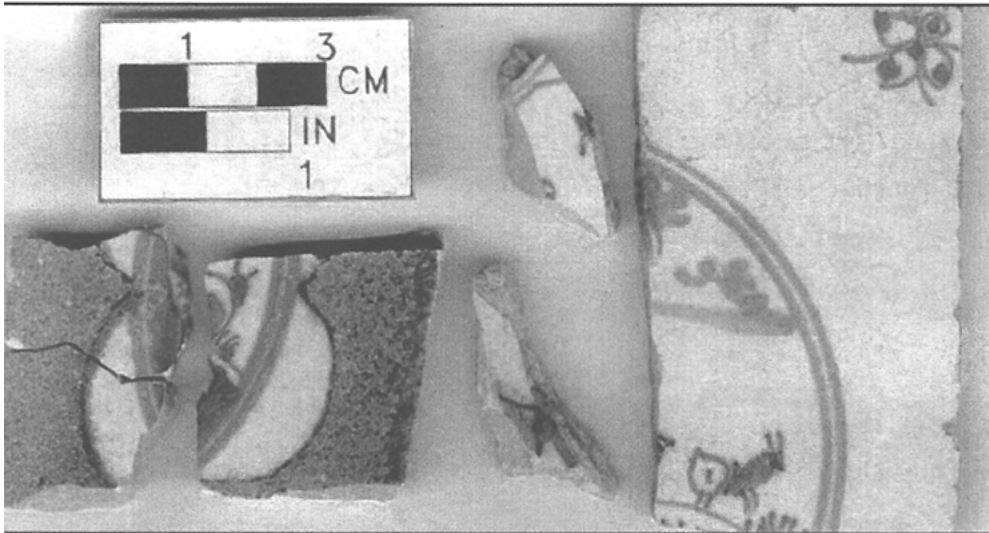


Figure 10, Fireplace tiles

gray, yellow, and white with a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch black stripe. Some plaster was directly on the brick rather than on a plaster lath, indicating the existence of plaster-covered chimneys. Large quantities of distinctive ornamental fireplace tiles were found at either end of the structure. Brass tacks found at the site suggest upholstered furniture, and brass drawer pulls are evidence that the home was furnished with fine cabinets and desks. Dating of the artifacts indicates Colonel Pinckney constructed the residence soon after he purchased the property in 1754. The house was razed in 1828, most likely shortly after the Matthews family purchased the property.

A diverse accumulation of outbuildings was a defining characteristic of most self-sufficient southern plantations.<sup>6</sup> In keeping with this pattern, several outbuildings complete the Snee Farm main house complex. Archeologists uncovered the foundation of a kitchen (structure 13) approximately 25 feet from the main house foundation. This is consistent with most plantation layouts, which place the kitchen some distance from the main house in order to remove the heat, noise, commotion, and fire danger from the main residence. Planters also wanted to implement a “stricter regimen of racial segregation that was expressed by physical separation.”<sup>7</sup> Remnants consistent with a kitchen and specifically with the Pinckney family were recovered from the site. These include wine bottle seals bearing the inscription “C Pinckney 1766” and “C. Pinckney.” English tableware, Chinese glass, cutlery, wine bottle glass, windowpane, nails, bone, and tobacco pipes were also among the more than 20,000 artifacts recovered from this structure, further confirming its use as a kitchen. The high concentration of wine bottle fragments and fragments of fine china and crystal confirm the active use of Snee Farm by the Pinckneys, especially for entertaining.

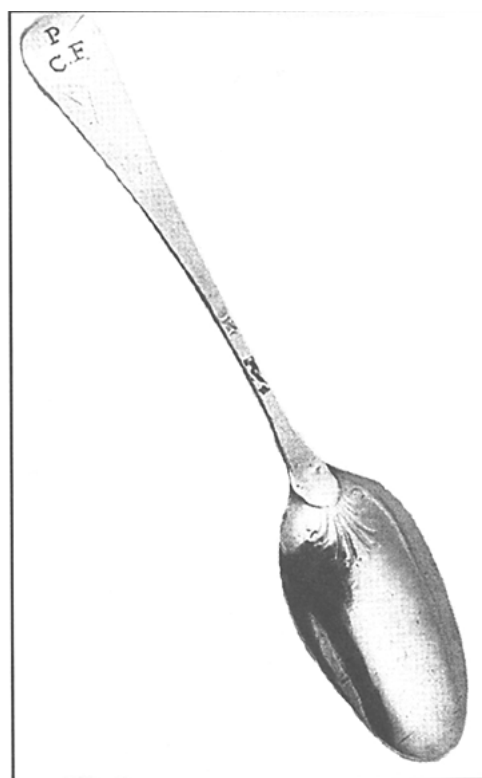
A well (feature 312) located 64 feet from the main house foundation was also part of the Pinckney-era farm. The well was packed with plaster that matched the plaster found at the main house site, indicating that it was filled when the main house was demolished. The well also contained a silver spoon with the initials of Colonel Charles Pinckney and Frances Brewton Pinckney, definitively connecting the well to Colonel Pinckney's tenure on the farm. Other significant artifacts include several fragments from the same blue Delftware apothecary jar found in the kitchen. This, along with an 1826 penny located near the top of the rubble, links the kitchen and well to the Pinckney era. The main house, kitchen, and well were all demolished shortly after William Matthews acquired the farm in 1828.

Additional dwellings found in the core of the plantation complex include the brick foundation of a modest structure (structure 14), which archeologists believe was the overseer's house or a slave dwelling.<sup>8</sup> This house, though not grand, had a fireplace extension from which Delft fireplace tiles were recovered. Remnants of another structure (structure 16) are also

interpreted by archeologists as a slave dwelling. This structure was relatively small and rested on brick piers. The accumulation of artifacts north of structures 14 and 16 indicates a possible additional structure, which was most likely a third slave dwelling. These three slave dwellings are clearly a higher class of structure than the earthen dwellings of the slave village, which are located about 250 yards to the southwest. The difference in the construction and location of the dwellings for enslaved people illustrates the well-documented dichotomy between field slaves and house slaves in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. An additional structure (structure 11), similar in size to structure 14 but with plaster walls and white-painted brick



*Figure 11,  
Delftware jar fragment*



*Figure 12, Pinckney spoon*

exterior, was at one time thought to be the remains of Charles Pinckney's main house. Artifacts recovered from structure 11, including a 1722 penny, indicate it was occupied much earlier than the Pinckney era. Structure 11 is believed to be a residence used by previous owners.<sup>9</sup>

Shortly after inheriting Snee Farm in 1782, Charles Pinckney embarked on a long period of political activity that frequently took him from the Charleston area. From November 1784 to February 1787, Pinckney was a member of the Continental Congress, which met in Trenton, New Jersey, and New York City. He attended the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787. In 1790, Columbia became South Carolina's capital, and Pinckney's service as governor (1789-1792, 1796-1797) and in the state assembly (1793-1796) kept him in Columbia while the legislature was in session. In 1799 and 1800, Pinckney was in the temporary national capital at Philadelphia for sessions of the United States Senate. From the summer of 1801 through the end of 1805, he was in Europe serving as U.S. minister to Spain.<sup>10</sup>

No plantation records for Snee Farm are known to exist and a comprehensive search of the letters and newspaper entries from this period has not been undertaken. Historians must rely largely on published sources for scattered clues to Pinckney's use of Snee Farm. When President Washington breakfasted at Snee Farm in 1791 during his grand tour of the new nation, Pinckney described the property as "indifferently furnished" and "a place I seldom go to." Pinckney's apologies for the furnishings and condition of Snee Farm in his letter to Washington may have represented conventional eighteenth-century modesty and do not necessarily indicate that the plantation was abandoned.<sup>11</sup> Evidence from Christ Church Parish records suggests Pinckney's infrequent residency during this time. Pinckney was elected a vestryman of the parish annually from 1797 through 1802, but only in 1807 did he meet the residency requirement for service.<sup>12</sup> One Charleston County record reported in 1808 that Charles Pinckney's properties were "wholly unproductive" and some of his properties were "in perishing condition the house going to ruin and daily diminishing in value."<sup>13</sup>

Gaining a more complete picture of the role of Snee Farm in Charles Pinckney's life will require additional investigation of his use of his many other properties. In 1816, when he was forced to convey most of his real property to trustees to discharge his debts, Pinckney owned six plantations in addition to Snee Farm: Frankville and Hopton, on opposite sides of the Congaree River five miles from Columbia, Wrights Savannah on the Carolina bank of the Savannah River, Mount Tacitus on the Santee River, an unnamed 1600-acre plantation near Georgetown, and a 1,200-acre tract at Lynches Creek.<sup>14</sup> Among these properties may be the three coastal plantations Pinckney was known to have purchased on credit in 1795-1796 for

£29,000.<sup>15</sup> Wrights Savannah and Mount Tacitus were Laurens family properties inherited by Pinckney in 1794, upon the death of his wife, Mary Eleanor Laurens Pinckney. These properties were eventually removed from the conveyance for the benefit of his children. Also included in Pinckney's 1816 trust conveyance were his lavish townhouse in Charleston and Shell Hall, a residence in the village of Mount Pleasant.<sup>16</sup> Pinckney may also have owned and disposed of other properties prior to 1816 that are not listed in the trust conveyance.

In 1758, Colonel Pinckney noted that both the farm and his law practice were prospering.<sup>17</sup> Although we do not know specifically what life was like on Snee Farm for Charles

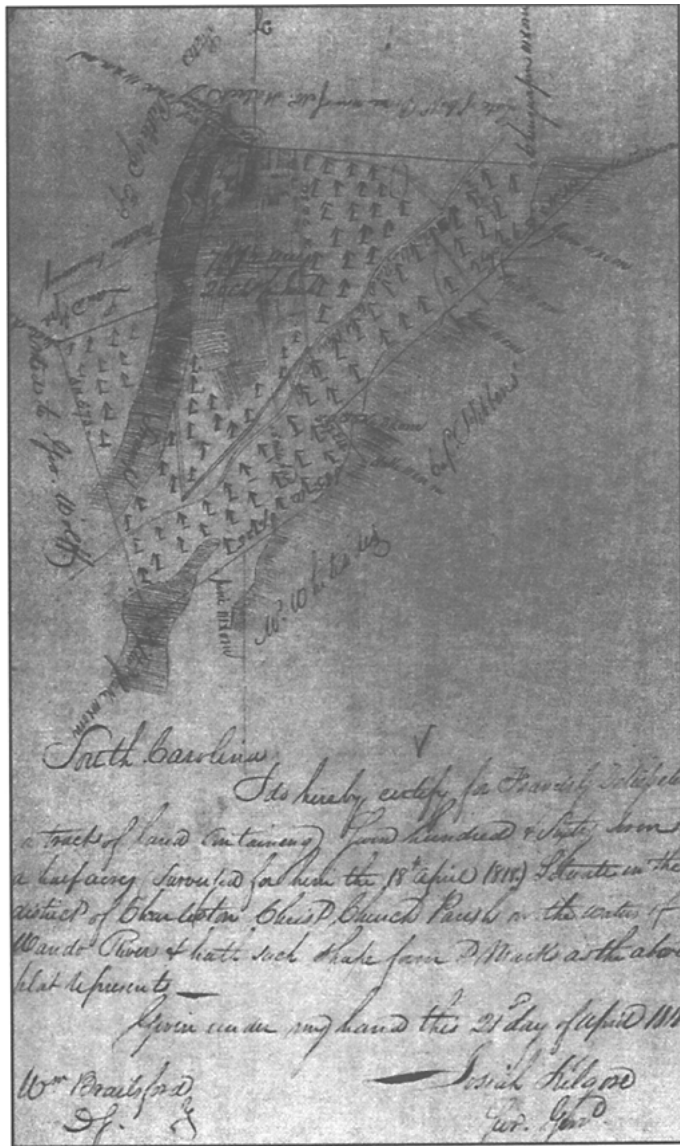


Figure 13, 1818 Plat of property

Pinckney, we do know that he derived some of his fortune from the farm's agricultural products, which were most likely the cash crops of rice and indigo as well as lumber and provisions. The 1818 plat of Snee Farm indicated fields of rice, cultivated land, and woodlands. A typical Charleston area plantation in the eighteenth century, such as Snee Farm, would have produced cash crops as well as provisions for the slaves, family residences in Charleston, and the city markets.<sup>18</sup> Although foodstuffs could be lucrative, most plantation owners derived the bulk of their profits from rice, which came to dominate both the physical and social landscape in the eighteenth-century low country. The agricultural domination of rice was so complete that by 1761, James Glenn noted, "The only commodity of any consequence produced in South Carolina is rice."<sup>19</sup>

Snee Farm's location along the tidal marshes made rice growing possible, and the 1818 plat indicates rice fields and two or three rice "banks" or levees. The tidal creek and the remains of a large levee crossing the low-lying areas of the farm are additional physical evidence of tidal rice cultivation. On one side of the levee the water is brackish and unsuitable for planting; on the other side of the levee cattails are present, indicating fresh water suitable for growing rice. This levee occupies the same location as the one depicted on the plat of 1818.<sup>20</sup> It is also possible that upland rice, which required less irrigation, was grown on Snee Farm.

Rice was more lucrative than other cereals, but it also required a significantly higher capital investment, keeping all but the wealthiest planters from the business. Rice could be profitably grown only on large plantations employing at least 30 slaves.<sup>21</sup> The surge in profitability of tidal rice production allowed coastal plantation owners to become some of the wealthiest citizens in the British Empire in the eighteenth century.<sup>22</sup> The creation of this wealth was directly related to the knowledge and labor of the slaves who were living on the plantations and working the fields. Slave labor was considered an essential ingredient in successful cash crop cultivation, and as the profits from the rice plantations grew, so did the slave population.<sup>23</sup>

The production of rice and indigo on plantations was the main stay of the coastal South



*Figure 14, Sheaf of rice*

Carolina economy in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. Rice, the primary export crop, tied South Carolina to a world-wide economic system. However, without the continual flow of enslaved labor, the large profits associated with the production of these crops would have been impossible. A triangular trade, based on the importation of slaves from Africa and the exportation of rice to Europe and the West Indies emerged, linking South Carolina to markets in Europe and Africa. The revenue generated by this trading system allowed the southern colonies to become economically viable and formed the underpinnings of the South Carolina low country life.

Slavery was such an integral part of this economic system that the South Carolina



delegates to the Constitutional Convention fought hard to protect it as the foundation of their way of life. Charles Pinckney was a vigilant advocate in the slavery debate, defending the institution against the abolitionist tendencies of the delegates from the Northern states. He argued that because of slavery there was a “solid distinction as to the interests between the Southern and Northern states,” and that Georgia and South Carolina “in their rice and indigo had a peculiar interest which might be sacrificed” if they did not have adequate representation in Congress. This representation was secured by counting 60% of the South’s slave population in apportioning representatives to Congress (the three-fifths clause) thus insuring the South larger Congressional representation. Pinckney also fought hard to allow for the continued importation of enslaved people until 1808, and the fugitive slave clause (which would forcibly return escaped slaves captured in free states). Because of their tenacious insistence on protecting their labor system and thus the foundation of their wealth, Southerners won major concessions from the rest of the nation on almost every issue relating to slavery.<sup>24</sup>

South Carolina planters made rice profitable, but the roots of South Carolina rice cultivation stretch 3,000 years into Africa’s past. African strains of rice and cultivation methods developed independently from the rice varieties and growing methods employed in Asia.<sup>25</sup> From Senegal to the Cote d’Ivoire, Africans perfected the intricacies of manipulating tidal rivers to irrigate their rice fields. The African cultivation methods, and possibly the indigenous rice, *oryza glaberrima*, traveled with the bondspeople to the South Carolina coast. Geographic similarities between South Carolina and West Africa made the low country ideal for rice cultivation.

South Carolina planters, though familiar with rice, were inexperienced in its production and relied heavily on their enslaved people’s knowledge to successfully produce the crop.<sup>26</sup> Planters preferred slaves with rice-growing skills, whether directly from Africa or from a plantation already involved in rice production. Advertisements in local papers highlight planters’ desire for slaves experienced in the cultivation of rice. An announcement in the *Evening Gazette* in 1785 advertised a cargo of “windward and gold coast negroes, who have been accustomed to the planting of rice.”<sup>27</sup> British planter William Stock’s requirements for qualified slaves typified planters’ preferences: “As to the Negroes, I must get them either in South Carolina or Georgia, and must choose such as are used to the different cultivation I begin with as Rice, Cotton, Indigo, etc.”<sup>28</sup> Slave traders, eager to meet their customers’ needs, sought slaves familiar with rice cultivation. Historians estimate that about 43% of all Africans entering South Carolina during the colonial period were from the African rice-growing regions.<sup>29</sup> Although the majority of these slaves probably had no experience growing rice, the influence of the many hundred who did cannot be discounted.



Figure 15, *Preparing the rice fields*

Preparing and cultivating the fields and harvesting rice were laborious and unhealthy jobs dominated by mud, heat, yellow fever, malaria, insects, and snakes. Establishing the rice fields was a particularly onerous process, requiring the slaves to physically alter the coastal landscape. First the tidal marshes had to be cleared, drained, and leveled. Then embankments, or levees, about five feet high and twelve feet wide, were built surrounding each field. Draft animals could not be used because they would have sunk under their own weight in the boggy soil. Several times a year, the tidal pull on the rivers was employed to flood the fields. In order to regulate water levels throughout the growing season, slaves built and maintained a complex series of dams,

gates, and sluices. The maintenance of the levees and hydraulics was critical to the success of a rice crop. If a dam or levee broke, and salt water flooded into the fields, the land would have to remain fallow while it desalinized.

Rice cultivation was as difficult and unhealthy as creating the fields. Slaves pressed the rice seeds into the muddy ground with their heels, then flooded the fields to encourage germination. Once the seeds sprouted, the fields were drained and weeded. Weeding the rice fields had to be done by hand. The fields were then alternately flooded and drained to keep the soil moist and the weeds under control, and to deter the birds and other animals. The final flooding took place under the watchful eye of the “trunk minder” who was responsible for gradually raising the water level in the fields to support the top-heavy rice stalks.

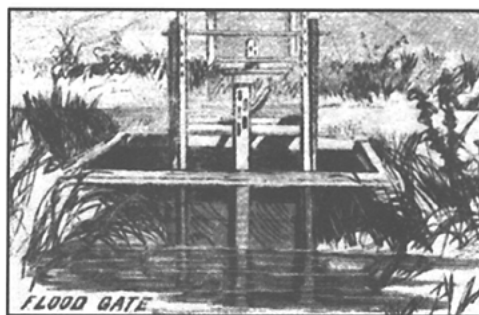


Figure 16, *Flood gates*

Harvesting the rice was done in the late fall. Once the rice was harvested, it had to be threshed and winnowed, and the white kernel of rice had to be milled from the indigestible hull. African-born slaves again initially provided the necessary skills and knowledge for the milling process. Around 1500 BC, West African women began processing rice by employing a hand-pounding mortar and pestle. This was the primary



Figure 17, Flooded rice fields



Figure 18, Working in the rice fields

system used in South Carolina until Jonathan Lucas developed the water-driven mill in the late eighteenth century.<sup>30</sup> After milling, the final step was polishing the rice to prevent spoilage. This involved removing the oily bran from the kernel.

The other major crop most likely grown on Snee Farm was indigo, which accounted for one-quarter of all exports in South Carolina at the beginning of the American Revolution.<sup>31</sup> Land difficult to irrigate was ideal for planting the hearty indigo plant. Once indigo was planted, it could be virtually ignored until harvest. The processing of indigo, however, was extremely time and labor intensive. As soon as the leaves were harvested, they had to be transported to a series of vats where the leaves fermented while

they were continuously pumped and stirred. The noxious blue liquid was then drained from the vats and mixed with lye to set. The sediment was then dried into blocks.<sup>32</sup> Archeologists and historians have no direct evidence of the production of indigo on Snee Farm. However, the processing of indigo required skilled craftspeople such as carpenters and coopers, both of which were listed in the Snee Farm slave inventory of 1787.

In addition to rice and indigo, Charles Pinckney owned cattle that most likely grazed in the woodland area indicated on the 1818 plat map. Lumber was possibly harvested from the woodland area for use at Pinckney's Charleston and Mount Pleasant homes. Additionally, the pines in the forest would have provided turpentine, pitch, and other naval stores. In the 1787 slave inventory, the first slave listed is Cudjoe, who was a driver and a sawyer, further underscoring the importance of the woodlands.



Figure 19, Harvesting rice



Figure 20, Milling rice using traditional African methods

Compared with their upland counterparts, low country slaves worked under a unique labor system. “Tasking” was virtually unknown throughout much of the South where gang labor prevailed, but was the distinguishing characteristic of coastal slavery. Masters and slaves negotiated a system of labor where planters conceded control over work time in exchange for a specific unit of output. The task system measured work by specific tasks rather than the sun-up-to-sun-down gang system employed by most southern plantation owners. Each slave was given an identifiable job such as weeding or planting. The standard measurement for a day’s work was a square of one-quarter of an acre, except when a task was particularly arduous or light. Based on his or her age, skill, and capacity each slave was classified as a full-task, half-task, or quarter-task slave. When the task was completed the slave was free for the balance of the day. This labor system may be linked to absentee owners’ need to readily measure a slave’s work. It is also possible that tasking labor was the legacy of a negotiated arrangement between slaves, who possessed the knowledge of rice production, and landowners, who relied on their knowledge.<sup>33</sup>

Tasking provided a modicum of autonomy for slaves by enabling them to control a part of their time. Often, assigned tasks could be completed by 2:00 p.m., which left several hours for slaves to satisfy their own needs. Both men and women kept small gardens and raised livestock. Slave gardens varied from half

an acre to two acres and consisted of vegetables such as corn, peas, greens, and occasionally even rice. Slaves also kept hogs and chickens. Both produce and livestock were consumed to supplement a slave’s rations. What was not consumed was sold in the local markets or traded for luxuries such as tobacco, cloth, alcohol, or more desirable food.<sup>34</sup> One traveler who

observed the practice of slaves bringing their goods to market remarked: "on the country side was heard the songs of the Negroes as they rowed their boats up the river on their return from the city, whither they had taken their small wares - eggs, fowls, and vegetables - for sale, as they do two or three times a week."<sup>35</sup>

In addition to raising domesticated animals, slaves commonly hunted and fished. Depending on the temperament of the master and the proximity of the plantation to woods and streams, slave owners often encouraged their slaves to hunt. Most slaves trapped their game, but some masters allowed slaves to use guns, despite laws prohibiting gun ownership by slaves. Through the use of gardens and hunting, slaves achieved limited economic independence, ameliorating their existence as chattel.<sup>36</sup>

There is archeological evidence that the task system was the predominant labor system employed on Snee Farm during Charles Pinckney's tenure. Trash pits containing crustacean shells and animal bones point to the slaves' ability to control their own foodways through fishing and hunting. The fence that may have lined the domestic compound indicates slaves kept gardens and domesticated animals. A lead shot found in a posthole of one of the slave dwellings indicates slave ownership of guns for hunting. Additionally, since the task system was the rule in the low country, we can reasonably assume Snee Farm was no exception.

Large slave populations living in the relative isolation of rice plantations allowed slave life in the low country to retain distinctly African elements. Large, isolated populations, coupled with the continual flood of West African bondpeople into South Carolina (at least until 1808) ensured the survival of many West African cultural traditions. Samuel Dyssli, a Swiss immigrant traveling in South Carolina in 1731 observed, "Carolina looks more like a negro country than a country settled by white people."<sup>37</sup> By 1790, the low country parishes were nearly 70% black. The plantation owners' tendency to leave the plantations under the command of black drivers meant slaves often had little contact with whites and obtained only a limited familiarity with European-American culture. The lack of inter-racial contact, along with an innate preference for their own cultural traditions,<sup>38</sup> effectively kept the enslaved people from wholly adopting European-American cultural practices. Instead, they retained many West African traditions and in their unique isolation blended characteristics of myriad African cultures and European and European-American traditions. The resulting culture is known as Gullah.<sup>39</sup>

When Pinckney sold Snee Farm in 1817 the slave population numbered 43.<sup>40</sup> Pinckney's slaves undoubtedly interacted with the numerous slaves living on nearby plantations, forming an extended slave community further strengthening the Gullah culture on Snee Farm.

One product of low country African-American culture is the Gullah language. Gullah is

not a patois, but a distinctive language with its own rules of grammar. Gullah was the everyday tongue of low country blacks for generations and is spoken today by many in South Carolina and Georgia.<sup>41</sup> The early roots of Gullah are in the pidgin spoken in Africa among the polyglot slavers, African slave traders and merchants, and the enslaved people, all of whom needed a common method of communication. Once the enslaved people arrived at the Carolina coast, the pidgin evolved in the slave villages and fields into a complex, English-based Creole language, known as Gullah. African slaves adopted a mainly English vocabulary with the syntax and intonations common to West African languages. Gullah also makes rich use of word groups to form nouns, verbs, and adjectives such as: “day clean” (dawn), “beat-on iron” (mechanic), and “dry long so” (without reason). In 1949, Lorenzo D. Turner first documented Gullah’s origins, documenting approximately 4,000 Gullah words from 21 different West African languages. Some of these words include cooter, goober, yam, tote, and okra.<sup>42</sup> These words, now common in the English lexicon, illustrate that cultural transmission was not one way. The low country world was marked by a complex series of interactions among African Americans, European Americans, and newly arriving enslaved Africans. Blacks and whites influenced each other’s cultural patterns in countless ways, creating ways of living that distinguish the low country to this day.

Basket making is another Gullah tradition with its roots extending to the West African coast. The distinctive Gullah coiled sweet-grass basketry bears little resemblance to Native American or European traditions, but mirrors baskets made in the Senagambia region of Africa. Traditionally, men made large baskets used for agricultural purposes, and women made smaller baskets for household use. An evolved form of this distinctive basketry is still practiced by African Americans living in the Snee Farm area, providing a tangible link to the African past.<sup>43</sup>

Folktales or parables are another important characteristic of Gullah culture influenced by both African traditions and the slave experience in America.<sup>44</sup> These folktales often tell the story of a weaker or smaller animal outwitting a larger, quicker animal; a clear allegory to the master-slave relationship. Though the subject matter clearly grew from the slave experience in America, the majority of the parables maintain African structures and motifs.<sup>45</sup>

In many ways the landscape of the low country plantation belonged as much to the slaves as to the planters. On Snee Farm, evidence of the slave contribution is everywhere. Slaves cleared the land, built the roads, constructed the houses and outbuildings, and planted the crops. The slaves, as lifelong permanent residents, considered the plantation home. Often they subtly carved out safe places for themselves against the backdrop of subjugation.<sup>46</sup> The slave village emphasizes this dichotomy of space. The slave village at Snee Farm was located



*Figure 21, Sweetgrass basket*

about 250 yards from the Pinckney residence.<sup>47</sup> This distance put the village near the main house, but nonetheless in a private realm away from direct planter and overseer domination.

Subsurface remains in the slave village area provide evidence of three houses and a storage shed all in use from about 1750 to 1841.<sup>48</sup> The dwelling with the most readable remains measured 16 x 20 feet, with a 5-foot porch extension at the south end. There is strong documentary evidence and some physical evidence of two additional slave dwellings of similar size and formation. The dwellings are of post-in-ground construction with the posts about 2 to 2.5 feet apart. Most posts were round with the deeper postmolds indicating posts that supported the structure, and the shallower molds indicating replacement posts. The walls were either wood frame, or more likely, clay applied over sticks. The roof may have been palmetto thatch or shingle. The floor was packed earth or wooden plank. The yard surrounding the dwellings was probably swept dirt. Enclosing the residential area is a series of small, scattered postholes. These most likely represent loose fencing surrounding the dwellings.

Understanding the vernacular architecture of the slave village provides insights into the worldview of the bonds people. Architecture can reflect the transmission of cultural ideals and the transmutation of cultures in new environments.<sup>49</sup> The architecture of the Snee Farm slave village can be understood to show the strong African connections of recently arrived slaves. Archeological evidence indicates the slave dwellings in Snee Farm's slave quarters were more typically African than European.<sup>50</sup> In designing their dwellings slaves may have been replicating familiar African architectural styles. Small rectangular houses with steeply pitched roofs and dirt floors are typical of the African architectural vocabulary. Much of the living was done outdoors and the small structures were used only for sleeping and storage. The living patterns evidenced by the enslaved people at Snee Farm more closely fit their social needs than the aesthetics of the typical plantation owner. Plantation owners were most likely unaware of the slave dwellings' connection to Africa. They found the economically constructed houses to their liking, thus



*Figure 22, African dwelling which may be reminiscent of slave dwellings on Snee Farm*

continuing to unwittingly encourage the traditional African building practices.<sup>51</sup>

As was typical in Africa, the slave homes of Snee Farm did not have interior chimneys. Cooking was a communal activity, and there is archeological evidence of central cooking hearths and food preparation and disposal areas located within the yard. Even when interior chimneys were provided, such as at Middleburg Plantation on the Cooper River and Lexington Plantation on Wando Neck, slaves seem to have preferred to do their cooking and eating outdoors.<sup>52</sup>

Scattered around the Snee Farm slave village are pits filled with refuse. The uses of these pits probably evolved over time. Pits originally would have been dug to supply clay for the daubing of structure walls. Later, the clay was used for crafting pots. Once the clay was depleted, they became roasting pits for oysters and clams. Finally slaves filled the pits with refuse and swept in dirt. These pits further illustrate slave life on Snee Farm by providing insight into diet and foodways. The refuse in the pits is particularly instructive. The presence of fish and animal bones provides confirmation that Snee Farm slaves worked under the task system and had time to hunt and fish. The presence of squash rinds may indicate that they kept gardens.



Evidence of the slave diet and foodways is also gleaned from the colonoware<sup>53</sup> fragments found at the site. The three sizes of colonoware bowls are confirmation that the diet of the slaves remained relatively African. Most West Africans traditionally ate little meat. Instead, the typical diet consisted of a starch such as millet, corn, or rice served with a spicy vegetable sauce. The vegetables and spices included beans, squash, hickory nuts, cow peas, okra, eggplant, tamarind, onions, peanuts, sesame seeds, and peppers.<sup>54</sup> The slaves probably also consumed their food in a traditionally African manner. A designated cook prepared communal meals in a large colonoware bowl or later in a cast iron pot. The accompanying sauces were served in medium-sized colonoware bowls. Individuals ate their food with their hands from small colonoware bowls or clean leaves. This extensive use of colonoware explains the massive quantities usually found at slave sites, including Snee Farm.<sup>55</sup>

In the early days of colonial South Carolina, slave-holders concerned themselves little with the spiritual lives of their slaves. Over time, conversion to Christianity became a greater priority for the slave owners.<sup>56</sup> Those slaves who did convert often selectively embraced Christianity, fusing Christian ideas with their traditional animist beliefs.<sup>57</sup> The four blue beads found in the slave quarters are undoubtedly related to religious practices of the slaves. Blue beads, though poorly understood, were a central religious symbol and imply religious rituals.<sup>58</sup> They were used as signs of marriage, as fertility amulets, and to ward off disease. It is also possible that the beads were used for adornment.<sup>59</sup>

In addition to the slave dwellings, there is evidence of a non-domestic storage building in the village area. The structure measured approximately 8 x 11 feet. This windowless building had a wooden upper story resting on a brick foundation. A portion of a hinge was found in the area, suggesting a stout door with a lock. The material evidence surrounding this structure points to its use as a storage building, locked away from the slaves.

The material evidence of both enslaved and free settlement on Snee Farm brings us closer to understanding the daily life on a working low country plantation. As a man born into a life of privilege, Charles Pinckney was part of the complex milieu of low country society. He was enmeshed in an economic system based on the rice industry and the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which necessarily shaped his attitudes and worldviews. The history of Charles Pinckney and the slaves he owned are inexorably linked to this site. The archeological resources and surviving landscape features are key to interpreting the unique world of Charles Pinckney and his bonds people. These resources provide insight into the social, political, and economic environment of an eighteenth and nineteenth-century low country plantation. Through archeology, Snee Farm is placed in the context of the United States as a young nation, and its role in

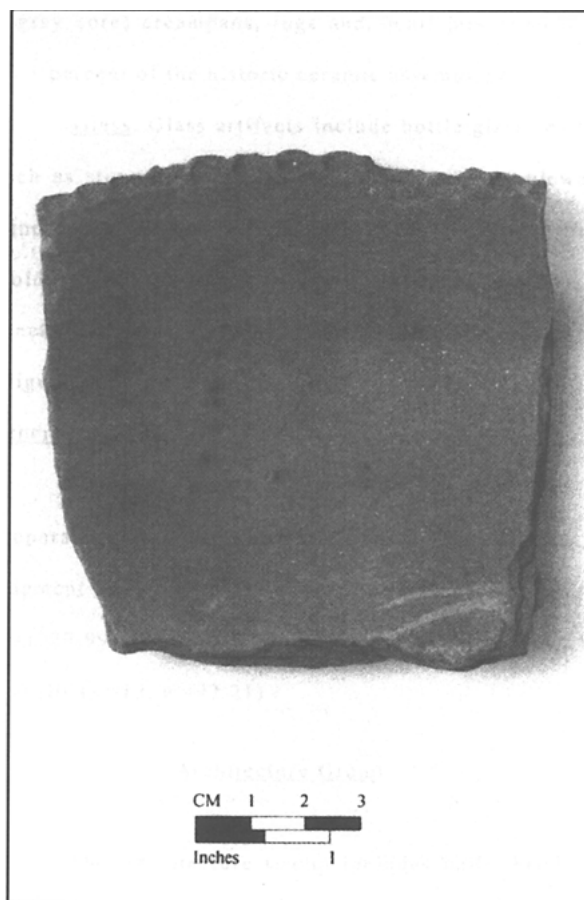


Figure 23, Colonoware shard

shaping the lives and contributions of its free and enslaved inhabitants is illuminated.

### Significance

Colonel Charles Pinckney purchased Snee Farm in 1754 and it remained in the Pinckney family until Governor Charles Pinckney sold it to repay his debts in 1817. The period of significance for Snee Farm for this context is thus the period of Pinckney ownership from 1754-1817. The first area of significance is the demonstrated association of *in situ* archeological deposits with Charles Pinckney and his family. Recovered artifacts definitively associate the Pinckneys with the farm during these dates. These items include personalized objects in company with a rich assemblage of artifacts spanning the Pinckney era. Due to the dearth of

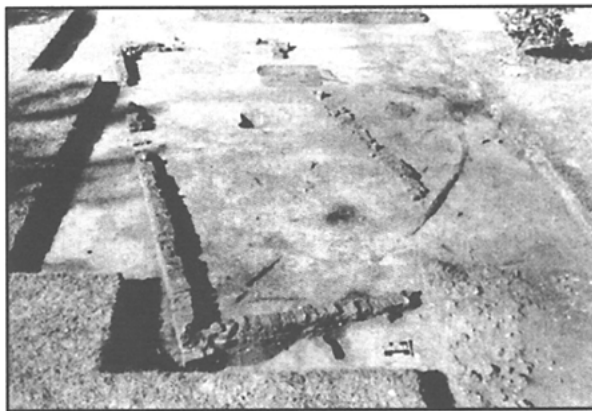
primary source documents associated with Charles Pinckney, these tangible artifacts are particularly critical.

Further contributions to the significance of this site are in the area of plantation and slave archeology. It is primarily through archeology that slaves are given a voice to provide important insights into their life ways and worldviews.<sup>60</sup> Snee Farm is particularly valuable for its impressive deposits of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century associative artifacts. These artifacts and the associated intra-site spatial patterning bring to light important information about low country rural life in early American history.

The archeological resources at Snee Farm possess national significance under National Register Criteria A, B, and D. In order to be eligible under Criterion A, “archeological properties must have well preserved features, artifacts, and intra-site patterning in order to illustrate patterns of events in history.”<sup>61</sup> The resources at Snee Farm are nationally significant for their

association with the growth and development of the plantation economy, which is an important theme in the development of the American economy. The resources are also significant at the state level as examples of the development of properties along South Carolina's river systems and slave dwellings and sites in South Carolina.

Under Criterion B, Snee Farm must be "associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he or she achieved significance."<sup>62</sup> Snee Farm is nationally significant as the only archeological site associated with Charles Pinckney. Pinckney, a prominent South Carolina statesman and important drafter of the Constitution, is significant for his role in shaping the American political landscape. Snee Farm was one of Pinckney's favorite plantations, and the recovered artifacts attest to the time he spent at the site.



*Figure 24, Foundations of main house complex*

Several contexts make Snee Farm nationally significant under Criterion D. Specifically, as the archeological research continues, we will gain a more clear understanding of how Charles Pinckney used this site. The main house complex, agricultural features, east yard, and slave village have the potential to yield information about life ways of both planters and

slaves on low country plantations in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, reflecting the theme of the development of the American economy. Of particular significance is the potential for the site to yield information about African-American life ways and the development of the Gullah culture. Further, Snee Farm is one of the only low country plantations in public ownership, which allows for unique research opportunities. Archeology on Snee Farm can be conducted in conjunction with research projects crafted to answer specific questions, and not simply as part of the mitigation process.

### **Integrity of Resources**

Although there are no remaining above-ground structures from the Pinckney era, the Snee Farm archeological resources have integrity of location, design, materials, setting, feeling, and association. Archeological sites nearly always have integrity of location, and Snee Farm is no exception. Archeological sites achieve integrity of design under Criteria A & B by artifact and feature

patterning. The unearthed structures, features, and artifacts of Snee Farm are well ordered and in a typical plantation design. When taken as a whole, they convey the significance of the plantation design. The plowing of this site has not damaged or displaced significant artifacts and thus does not diminish the integrity of the design under Criterion D. The integrity of the setting, though diminished by encroaching development, is still discernable. The farm's original 715 acres has been significantly reduced to twenty-eight acres, but the setting still reads as an agricultural site. The views of the marshes are intact and much as they would have been during Pinckney's tenure. With the foundations, post molds, and features clearly evident, the site has material integrity under all criteria. Development has to some extent diminished the site's integrity of feeling, but the site still conveys a quiet, rural feel, much as it did when it was Charles Pinckney's country seat. Snee Farm has integrity of association under Criteria A as an early American plantation and it is directly associated with several broad patterns of history. The site also has integrity of association for Criteria D because of the strong connection between the artifacts and their ability to answer important research questions about Charles Pinckney and Gullah life on the



*Figure 25, Snee Farm rice levee*

### **Contributing Resources**

Main House Complex Site  
Slave Village Complex Site  
Historic Rice Levees

### **Noncontributing Resources (under this context)**

Structure 12, foundation of late-nineteenth century cotton gin  
Structure 15, foundation of mid-nineteenth century smokehouse

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> All Pinckney's personal papers were destroyed when his home at 16 Meeting Street burned.

<sup>2</sup> "The Letters of Thomas Pinckney," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 58 (1957): 24-25.

<sup>3</sup> Williams, 123.

<sup>4</sup> *William Matthews vs. Henry Horlbeck et al.* 7 April 1844. Charleston Court of Appeals, 1844-1845: 197-200.

<sup>5</sup> Edgar, 5.

<sup>6</sup> John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 77.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 43-45.

<sup>8</sup> It is sometimes difficult to differentiate between slave and overseer dwellings in the archeological record because their standards of living were similar despite distinct differences in social status. See Michael J. Meyer, "Intrasite Spatial Patterning on a Colonial Site in the South Carolina Low Country: The Archeology of Charles Pinckney's Snee Farm" (Master's Thesis, Florida State University, 1998), 9; and Vlach, 135-139.

<sup>9</sup> According to Bennie Keel, evidence of a 1722 English coin on top of a brick pier may indicate that an earlier structure once stood on this site, but was demolished prior to the Pinckney ownership. See Bennie Keel, "Research Proposal for Archeological Investigations of a Mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century Structure at Charles Pinckney National Historic Site, South Carolina" (Tallahassee: National Park Service, Southeast Archeological Center, 17 November 1998).

<sup>10</sup> "Colonel Miles Brewton and Some of His Descendents," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 2 (1901): 144-47.

<sup>11</sup> Edgar, 8. Pinckney also hosted Washington at his home at 16 Meeting Street (Elliott, 374).

<sup>12</sup> Anne King Gregorie, *Christ Church, 1706-1959, A Plantation Parish of the South Carolina Establishment* (Charleston: Dalcho Historical Society, 1961), 69.

<sup>13</sup> National Park Service, Historic American Buildings Survey, Snee Farm (NPS, 1991), 15; Charleston County Report Book, 27 April 1808-7 March 1818: 398-399.

<sup>14</sup> These properties were listed in Pinckney's 1816 trust conveyance (Edgar, 44).

<sup>15</sup> Ulrich B. Phillips, "The South Carolina Federalists, II," *The American Historical Review* 14 (1908-9): 739. Phillips does not name the plantations.

<sup>16</sup> Edgar, 44.

<sup>17</sup> Williams, 15.

<sup>18</sup> Susan Hart Vincent, *Charles Pinckney National Historic Site Cultural Landscape Report* (Atlanta: National Park Service, 1998), 16. It is also possible that Snee Farm had a nursery, producing trees.

<sup>19</sup> Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Norton & Company, 1974), 35.

<sup>20</sup> Leland Ferguson, to Bennie C. Keel, 11 October 1995.

<sup>21</sup> Julia Floyd Smith, *Slavery and the Rice Culture in Low Country Georgia, 1750-1860* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 77; and Joyce E. Chaplin "Tidal Rice Cultivation and the Problem of Slavery in South Carolina and Georgia, 1760-1815," *William and Mary Quarterly* 49 (January 1992): 32.

<sup>22</sup> Peter A. Coclanis, "Bitter Harvest: The South Carolina Low Country in Historical Perspective," *Journal of Economic History* 45 (June 1985): 251- 256. A rice plantation owner could expect 20% - 25% annual net profit on rice.

<sup>23</sup> Ira Berlin, *Many Thousand Gone, The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 143; and Daniel C. Littlefield, *Rice and Slaves, Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 99.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders: Race and Liberty in the Age of Jefferson* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 12-18.

<sup>25</sup> Long before the French and Portuguese ships introduced Asian varieties of rice to some areas of Africa, Africans were developing their own cultivation methods. It is these methods that dominated early South Carolina agriculture. It is also possible that the African oryza glaberrima variety of rice was the first to be planted in South Carolina. It was later replaced with the higher yielding, whiter oryza sativa from Asia. The introduction of Asian grain, however, did nothing to change African cultivation methods (Wood, 59-60; Littlefield, 84-96).

<sup>26</sup> Judith A. Carney "The Role of African Rice and Slaves in the History of Rice Cultivation in the Americas," *Human Ecology* 26 (December 1998): 4; and Littlefield, 76-79.

<sup>27</sup> Wood, 60.

<sup>28</sup> Littlefield, 76.

<sup>29</sup> Judith A. Carney, "Rice Milling, Gender and Slave Labor in Colonial South Carolina," *Past and Present* 156 (November 1996): 7; and Littlefield, 113. It is difficult to determine the actual area of origin and ethnicity of African slaves. Many slaves were transported great distances within Africa prior to the middle passage. Slave traders also showed no particular aptitude for determining the ethnicity of their captives. Knowing that rice growing slaves were the most valuable in South Carolina, it is possible that they simply claimed that their human cargo was from the Rice Coast. It is also important to note that not all slaves from the "Rice Coast" actually grew rice.

<sup>30</sup> Carney, "Rice Milling, Gender and Slave Labor," 6.

<sup>31</sup> The indigo produced in South Carolina was of an inferior quality to the indigo produced in East Florida and the French West Indies. After the American Revolution, the British subsidies of indigo ended and demand for South Carolina indigo declined.

<sup>32</sup> Berlin, 148.

<sup>33</sup> Berlin, 154; and Smith, 45

<sup>34</sup> Sam Bowers Hilliard, *Hog Meat and Hoecake: Food Supply in the Old South 1840-1860* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), 27, 182-183.

<sup>35</sup> Fredrika Bremer, *The Homes of the New World: Impressions of America*, vol. 1, trans. Mary Botham Howitt (London: A. Hall, Virtue and Company, 1853), 305. Quoted in Hillard, 183.

<sup>36</sup> Larry E. Hudson, Jr., *To Have and to Hold: Slave Work and Family Life in Antebellum South Carolina* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 16.

<sup>37</sup> Leland Ferguson, *Uncommon Ground, Archeology and Early African America, 1650-1800* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Press, 1992), 59.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 118

<sup>39</sup> The Gullah culture is known as Geechee in Georgia. Gullah is generally believed to be a derivation of the word Angola, but it also could have referred to the Gola people who lived in present-day Liberia.

<sup>40</sup> When Pinckney was forced to sell his plantation because of his debts he had 43 slaves. It is possible that at its peak Snee Farm had a much larger population. According to the 1810 Census, Charles Pinckney owned 58 slaves in Christ Church Parish.

<sup>41</sup> There are approximately 500,000 native Gullah speakers in South Carolina and Georgia. See Salikoko S. Mufwene, "The Ecology of Gullah's Survival," *American Speech* 72 (Spring 1997): 69.

<sup>42</sup> John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972, 1979), 30.

<sup>43</sup> Dale Rosengarten, "Spirits of our Ancestors: Basket Traditions in the Carolinas," in *The Crucible of Carolina; Essays in the Development of Gullah Language and Culture*, ed. Michael Montgomery (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 147-149, 153-154.

<sup>44</sup> Many of these stories are commonly known to the majority of Americans as the Uncle Remus Stories, made famous by author Joel Chandler Harris, who heard them from African Americans in Georgia as a child.

<sup>45</sup> Blassingame, 23-24, 31.

<sup>46</sup> Vlach, 168-169.

<sup>47</sup> In the early days of Snee Farm, it is possible that all the slave dwellings were located much nearer to the main house. See Meyer, 11.

<sup>48</sup> More investigations may uncover at least two other residences. Additionally a slave hospital, cookhouse, and work sheds could be associated with a plantation of this size. Bennie C. Keel, telephone conversation, July 13, 1999.

<sup>49</sup> Charles Winston Joyner, "Slave Folklife on the Waccamaw Neck: Antebellum Black Culture in the South Carolina Lowcountry" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1977), 220.

<sup>50</sup> Although African-influenced architecture was common, especially in the early eighteenth century, it was not always the rule. For example, eighteenth-century dwellings for slaves at Boone Hall, an adjacent plantation, are made of brick and are more European in their design.

<sup>51</sup> Vlach, 155, 166-168; and Ferguson, 37, 68-75, 82.

<sup>52</sup> Paul E. Brockington, Jr., Linda F. Stine, and Connie M. Huddleston, "Searching for the Slave Village at Snee Farm Plantation: The 1987 Archeological Investigations" (Atlanta, GA: Brockington and Associates, 1994), 75. Evidence of this is provided at Middleburg Plantation, where the slave dwellings have interior chimneys and yet there is still evidence of a communal hearth.

<sup>53</sup> Colonoware is low-fired earthen pottery, molded by hand into vessels. Archeologists originally thought colonoware to be Native American in origin. However, the massive amounts found at African American archeological sites led archeologists to begin to question this hypothesis. Archeological investigations have since connected colonoware found in South Carolina to West African pottery. See Ferguson, 7-32.

<sup>54</sup> Ferguson, 94; and Brockington, 81.

<sup>55</sup> Ferguson, 97.

<sup>56</sup> West Africa religious traditions are as varied as its linguistic and cultural traditions. Some slaves arriving in South Carolina were already Christians, some Muslims, and some had beliefs rooted in animism.

<sup>57</sup> Smith, 173; and Margaret Washington Creel, *Peculiar People, Slave Religion and Community Culture Among the Gullah* (New York New York University Press, 1988), 2-5.

<sup>58</sup> Ferguson, 116; and Brockington, 80-81.

<sup>59</sup> Brockington, 80.

<sup>60</sup> Theresa A. Singleton, "Archeology of Afro-American Slavery in Coastal Georgia: A Regional Perception of Slave Household and Community Patterns" (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1980), 1.

<sup>61</sup> Jan Townsend, John H. Sprinkle, Jr., and John Knoerl, *National Register Bulletin 36: Guidelines for Evaluating Historical and Archeological Sites and Districts* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1993), 21.

<sup>62</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1991), 15.

<sup>63</sup> Townsend, 17-20; and Vincent, 41-44.